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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to clarify some important elements for counseling students. It states that the majority of troubled and disturbed primary school and college students are that way because they have trouble relating to their parents. The emphasis is shifted towards counseling troubled students' parents. It argues that the coordination of students' counseling and parents' counseling is the key element for helping the student get out of trouble. The purpose of this family counseling is to help troubled students mend the fence between themselves and their parents. This is accomplished by helping them clarify the intergenerational boundary, and helping them get out of the mentally chaotic situation either from fusion or disengagement. The paper also offers advice on counseling on campus. (JDM)

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by

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A Study of Family Therapy for Student Counseling

Osamu Honda (Mukogawa Women's University)

The author is a licensed clinical psychologist in Japan and serves as an associate professor as well as student's counselor at Mukogawa Women's University. He is trying to apply Bowen's family system theory to individual therapy and family therapy in the Campus Counseling Room.

1. Function of Upbringing at College

Along with popularization of higher education in Japan, a variety of young people come to colleges and universities. Some of them are intellectually insufficient for academic pursuit and mentally so immature that they require upbringing and guidance such as children receive from their parents at home. The parents who are unable t o educate their own children and unable to train them to be independent social beings, expect kindergartens and schools and even colleges and universities to assume the responsibilities of the upbringing of their offspring. Many of the parents want their children to go to and attend reputable schools and universities so that their children will be well-educated and that eventually they will become what they believe " mature and independent adults" with reputable jobs and positions.

The generation of baby boomers has passed now and the birth rate is sharply declining. So the institutions of higher education, in order to be financially sound, are fervently t trying to recruit their prospective students. That has resulted in a large number of immature students on campus still heavily dependent on their parents or somebody around who is available. In order to meet the need of those immature students and their parents the university has to expand the capacity and function of student counseling. The question whether university professors should really assume the responsibility of upbringing of mentally immature students, still remains to be answered. But we cannot abandon the seriously troubled student. We have to help them as much as possible.

We have learned through our counseling experiences that the majority of troubled and disturbed students are troubled because they have difficulty in the relationship with their own parents. So we have begun to put a heavy emphasis on the counseling of the troubled students' parents. This is of something novel in Japan yet .

2. Family Therapy in the Counseling Room

When a student comes to our office, we start talking with her, and when we find Ego Weakness with the student, we try to get in touch with her parents and arrange the meeting with them. The aim of the meeting with the student's parents is to help the student and her parents enhance their relationship. We believe that the good and comfortable relationship between the student and her parents is the most reliable element that will help her to be free from a difficult complex and then be independent of her parents. We try not to give advice. Instead we listen to the problems that the parents have. and we try accumulated to support the parents mentally. We have a large number of experiences of helping mentally troubled and disturbed students. such as Affective Disorder, Borderline State, Suicidal Desire and Psychotic Level, by offering counseling to their parents instead of giving them advice.

In the case of a student who attempts to run away from home or who needs hospitalization, counseling the student by itself doesn't really help. We need to give counseling to the seriously disturbed parents concerning the troubles of their child. The most important thing here is to help her family, especially her mother, accept her child as she is; her conduct and her problems, her difficulties. That, though indirectly, will help the student most effectively in the end. The student counselor cannot assume all the responsibilities, much less solve all the problems. We often need the resources of doctors and hospitals. We think that it's very important for us to let the troubled student's parents know what kind of resources they have and the choice is best to be made by the student's parents, not by the counselor. If the counselor makes the choice , it would mean that he/she deprives the opportunities of the parents to exercise the responsibilities as a parent. The job of the

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counselor is nothing but to help the parents make the choice . It often happens that the student's attitude toward her parents is very negative and even antagonistic, and the more immature and dependent the student is, the more important it is for the counselor to help the student and her parents to reconstruct their relationship and find comfort in the relationship. This is the best way to regain her mental stability. Thus, the coordination of the student' her parents' counseling is the key the student get out of the trouble.

3 Counseling for Helping Students Develop Themselves

The function of campus counseling should be not for giving troubled students a cure-all but for help themselves. This function is only possible in the protected situation of the counseling room in the protected educational institution in which they receive social training before they go out into a harsh competitive society.

When a student cannot meet the psychological developmental tasks at a proper stage of her life, her self-esteem tends to become very low and her self-image tends to become deteriorated. She is often troubled by a lack of confidence, by being unable to like herself or even by hating herself. In the case of a girl the symptom could lead to something as serious as neurotic body image which often causes Eating Disorder, phobic Neurosis and Anxiety Neurosis.

Kasahara points out the importance of developmental tasks in adolescence in his book "Adolescence." He says, the first is making friends with anybody of the same sex and the same age, and the second is able to cope with the physical changes of the adolescence. In the case of an obedient girl the second task is not easy. If she has had a deep-seated inferiority complex about her body, her effort for dieting leads to Eating Disorders. From my experiences, such a girl often has an uncomfortable relationship with her father. A girl who cannot like herself tends to suffer from a complex of not being able truly love her father, but rather hates him. To a girl, her father is the first opposite sex that she encounters in life. Subconsciously her mother could be a rival to compete for the love of her father. Ordinarily a father naturally assumes a role to accept his growing daughter as an independent being with admiration and adoration.

From the Mother-Infant Symbiosis, through the stage of mother-daughter coexistence, a girl grows to the stage where she encounters her father as the first opposite sex. Therefore, the appreciation she received from her father is the important factor to lead her to accept her own femininity. Needless to say, the good relationship between her and her mother is the premise for this kind of desirable relationship between her and her father. Sometimes her father assumes the role of her mother due to the unstable relationship between her and her mother. The unstable relationship between her father and mother often causes the mental instability of their daughter.

The purpose of Family Therapy in our counseling office is to help a troubled student mend the fence between herself and other members of her family. In other words, we help them clarify the Intergenerational Boundary, and help the student get out of the mentally chaotic situation, such as Fusion and Enmeshed, or Disengaged and Emotional Cut Off.

4 Expansion of the Function of Campus Counseling

The counseling room on the campus must be a space protected from any influences from without. Everybody concerned there must be free from any pressure from anybody or any organization. Thus, the time and space in the counseling room have to be such that protects both the counselor as well as the client. It is most desirable and effective to perform the job of counseling with the maximum freedom with the minimum responsibility. Performing the counseling doesn't at all mean assuming all the responsibilities that arise in such situations.

A counselor has to avoid such a situation as he or she has to assume the responsibilities for students' suicide, running away from home and disappearing and so forth. The situation like that will not help the counselor to help the clients.

A counselor has to measure and comprehend the two things at the same time. They are the depth of the client's problems hidden behind the client's appeals, and her capability of helping herself. The

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counselor should respect the client's ability to solve her problem by herself. So the relationship between the counselor and client must better be as such that they are apparently somewhat detached from each other but they deeply care for each other in truth. That can be only possible within the space and time in the counseling room and the counselor can minimize his/her responsibilities that he/she/her may have to assume by interviewing the troubled student's parents. On that condition a counselor can perform his/her job to the maximum extent even with the most seriously troubled students.

Summary

The report aims to clarify some important elements for student counseling.

The majority of troubled and disturbed students are troubled because they have difficulty relating to their own parents. So we have begun to put a heavy emphasis on the counseling of the troubled students' parents. The coordination of the students's counseling and her parents' counseling is the key element for helping the student get out of the trouble.

The purpose of family therapy in our counseling office is to help a troubled student mend the fence between herself and other members of her family. In other words, we help them clarify the intergenerational boundary, and help the student get out of the mentally chaotic situation, such as fusion and enmeshed, or disengaged and emotional cut off.

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